Digital Kids: Learning in a New World

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The world has changed, it has changed quite a bit over the past 20 years. I believe that humans will look to this period of time many years from as a time of great revolution and evolution. We have changed as a species in this time period through the spectrum of technology more than any time period in human history. The quickness of how this has occurred is astonishing. Everything has changed, the way you read the news, the way you communicate, how people treat each other, how people react, and how people learn. There was no way that the technological advances were not going to have a direct effect on the education of young learners. It is an unprecedented change, one where people were and still are hesitant to the changes that have occurred. However, to get to these young learners, to get to their minds and help them learn. We must have a solid understanding of how technology influences their daily lives.

Students use technology almost constantly, whether that is with their cell phones, or their iPads. They constantly have some form of technology going on in their lives. I feel that I can be considered into the same category as many of these students as well. I grew up in a time where technology was growing and coming very fast. While it wasn’t as prevalent as when I was in public school, it became huge while I was in college. There are many things going on at one time. The television is on, you have your laptop up, your cell phone is right beside you, you have 5 different tabs going not to mention 10 different people communicating on your phone. It’s a lot, it’s very different.

How does that affect them when they learn, how has this new age technology affected them with their education? I have a few different points after being around students and being a student myself. We have so much going on around us, if we are not interested in it, or if we do not feel that it is important to us, we move on, we do something else. This is where I felt it was important for myself in the classroom to find a meaning for these kids. I had to make whatever we are talking about important to them and their lives. I had to make it exciting, I had to bring enthusiasm; students feed off enthusiasm. They need to know why this is important, they need to know that they need to know the information.

The next point is you have to attack topics from different angles. Students have short attention spans, they need to be fed the information in different ways. You have to use pictures, short videos, class discussions, short readings; all in one period. Now obviously if you use too much, you will get off track and the students will get lost. Keeping them engaged is key, allowing them to talk and discuss has been huge for me. One of the largest things that I have found when I gave work for them to do, is simply allow them to listen to music. I said to myself, what do I do when I sit down and do work. Is it silent, what is my environment like? I listened to music, it was almost instinctual, I have done it forever. One day in class, they had a large assignment to do individually, I told them that as long as I don’t hear it, they can listen to it. They worked incredibly well, almost no one talked during the assignment. The rest of my time with that class, I used it, and it worked great. Our production levels rose, and many issues with talking or acting out of control went away.

My views starting as a new teacher, and growing up in this new generation of learners is on par with the views of Mark Presky. His views tell how teachers of the older generation were fighting against the new ways of how this generation is(Backup Generation). They would cheer when teachers would stand up against people saying that education would have to change. That article was from 2008, with his article from 2011, there began to be steps in a different direction. Clearly saying that there needs to be a why to what the students are learning, they need to know it in their own reality(Reformers). I wrote the majority of this before reading these articles, then reading it gave me a sense that other people are seeing it too. That this idea of why and connecting it to them is not a bad idea and maybe I’m onto something.

I don’t believe though that there needs to be a complete reform of education. The bare basics of how the education system has been over the past 50 years has proven to be successful. The simplicity of education in the past allowed teachers to teach, allowed students to learn, and allowed freedom with discipline. There are many things now in education that are negating the actual function of teaching in the classroom. I don’t think we need to completely scrap the past ways, I don’t believe the kids want that. One thing that I have been told and found true in my short experience with coaching and teaching. Is that students want discipline, they want that old school way of learning and teaching. Can it be adapted over and adjust with the new forms and technologies that are coming in, absolutely. Students want it though, we should study what worked in the past and adapt with the technologies and students of today.

**Works Cited**

Presky, M. (2008, Jan. & feb.). Backup Education. Educational Technology, Vol 48.

Presky, M. (2011, January 24). The Reformers are leaving are 20th Century Schools. SNS Newsletter.